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ABSTRACT

The rising population of foreign residents, often with limited knowledge of the English language, has created an interest in developing programs in English as a Second Language (ESL). One community college has addressed the need by undertaking a program that focuses on the selection, training, and evaluation of part-time ESL and adult basic education instructors. The prospective ESL tutors are recruited from the literacy council, reading centers, private aid organizations, and all school levels. Participants then attend an intensive workshop to prepare for the classroom. These future teachers are assigned a mentor, experienced in the field, to help them design courses and gather materials, and to evaluate their progress. The program is organized based on current understanding of adult pedagogy, the characteristics and learning styles of adult learners, enhancement of student motivation, the need for cultural sensitivity with different ethnic groups, adaptation of materials, initial testing and placement, and the need for continued academic advising. Guidelines are presented for program design and administration, including instructor and program evaluation. A brief list of related resources is provided. (MSE)

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TRAINING PART-TIME ESL INSTRUCTORS

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Training Part-Time ESL Instructors

OVERVIEW OF THE PRESENTATION

Educators in the United States have become concerned about the increasing number of people who have not reached a certain degree of literacy. Various complex theories of interacting variables have been offered to explain the decline in literacy, but insufficient knowledge of the English language is one important contributing factor. The rising population of foreign residents admitted before and after the amnesty program went into effect caused various states to enact emergency programs for teaching ESL. This paper details one such effort of a community college system to deal with the call for literacy primarily, in the recruitment and training of part-time ESL instructors.

OUTLINE

I. Perceived Need for Training
   1. ESL students
   2. Amnesty

II. Adult pedagogy
   1. Adrogogy vs. pedagogy
   2. Guidelines

III. Student Characteristics
   1. Traits
   2. Learning styles

IV. Motivation
   1. Setting goals
   2. Teacher behavior

V. Cultural Sensitivity
   1. Enhancing cross-cultural awareness
   2. Specific guidelines for Asian students

VI. Materials
   1. Adapting materials for ESL students
   2. Using pragmatic materials

VII. Placement
   1. Initial placement in the program
   2. Testing

VIII. Advising
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IX. Evaluation
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   2. Program evaluation

X. Program administration
   1. Centers and sites
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XI. Resources

XII. Mini workshop outline

PERCEIVED NEED FOR TRAINING

Skim through the articles in journals, newspapers, and magazines published in the United States these days and notice the emphasis that has been placed on Literacy. Authors such as E. D. Hirsch (1987) have certainly expanded on the definition of functional literacy and what skills Americans should possess in order to be considered literate. A great number of Americans have been found to be lacking in the basic skills educators and spokesmen from business and industry consider necessary for responsible citizens. Various complex theories of interacting variables have been offered regarding the cause of such a decrease in the literacy rate, but incomplete knowledge of the English language is a contributing factor.

In addition, the United States has accepted a large number of aliens into an extensive amnesty program (Olson, R. E. W-B, 1989). These new arrivals must learn and demonstrate a proficient knowledge of English language, culture, and government in a short time. Because part-time teachers of varying qualifications (from full-time classroom teachers to volunteer literacy tutors) have rapidly been hired to execute and administer the amnesty and literacy program, the training of these instructors is crucial in ensuring that the program will benefit the recipients (and comply with grant guidelines). Clark County Community College is one of the centers statewide which have been entrusted with funds to create, administer, and evaluate an extensive ESL program.

Training of the ESL instructors has been a vital part of ensuring that the ESL program maintains a high degree of accountability and quality (Weinstein-Shr, 1989).

This paper focuses on the selection, training, and evaluation of part-time ESL and adult basic education teachers as well as on the administration of the program itself. The instructional workshop that prospective teachers attend is presented here in outline form with the major points highlighted; instructors are exposed to a variety of concepts regarding adult education, adult learners and foreign students.

SELECTION

All prospective ESL tutors are recruited from the literacy council, several reading centers, private aid organizations and all levels of schools. After an initial interview with the program coordinator, candidates who express an understanding of teaching techniques and who demonstrate a sensitivity toward culturally-diverse students are chosen for the ESL system.

The next phase includes an intensive workshop, which prepares instructors for the classroom. Since the community college cannot devote a longer period of time to training, teachers receive only guidelines for creating and maintaining effective classes for all levels of ESL students. Providing a mentor, someone who is currently involved with ESL education, who is easy to contact, and who has the knowledge,

experience, and willingness to guide teachers, is a crucial part of the community college program.

The assigned mentor is responsible for overseeing the new teacher until various courses have been established. The mentor not only suggests materials and methodology, but also collects materials and resources the new teachers can make use of. The mentor is actively involved in visiting the classes and evaluating how new teachers interact in the classroom. Unlike the traditional evaluation, the observation sessions serve only to aid the teachers in tailoring the classes for specific situations. Normally, only one semester of close supervision is needed for each teacher. However, mentors must be willing to make themselves available as resource persons for the continuous questions teachers have regarding the program. Mentoring is not necessarily a one-way process; teachers make suggestions for change and are instrumental in assuring that the program remains sensitive to the needs of the learners.

ADULT PEDAGOGY

Adult education (androgogy) differs from pedagogy (education of children) in distinctive ways. An instructor who understands the differences and tailors lessons for adults can enhance retention of information and of students in the program. Older learners are able to take on more responsibility and to realize that the center for learning resides within themselves. In addition, adults share the following characteristics:

1) Adults can efficiently exchange information in cooperative learning units (group work). Adults are better able to focus on long-range planning and can accomplish ongoing projects. Groups who are given a project can divide up the work and pace themselves to finish the assignment. Adults are motivated enough to return to school to learn and realize that they can not accomplish their goals in only a short period of time.

2) Adult education teachers work in cooperation with the learner, realizing that each adult brings a multitude of life experience to the class session and may know a great deal about subjects the teacher does not. The instructor simply guides the students through a plan for learning while attempting to relate the materials to real-life experiences. For example, a module designed around vocational education topics not only exposes students to vocabulary and phrases they will need in similar situations, but also allows them to practice, thereby fostering self-assurance.

3) Teachers must sometimes counsel adults on how to fit study into their lives, since attending class usually means sacrificing time devoted to family, work, or other outside activities. Some basic tenants of study skills such as note-taking techniques and test studying strategies can be integrated into the curriculum to encourage retention.

4) Adults realize that the locus of control for learning is within themselves and that they are ultimately responsible

for self-discipline and time management. Instructors can bolster self-esteem by tailoring the materials to the needs and abilities of the students in a graduated curriculum that ensures success in learning the materials.

5) Adult educators have to recognize learning disabilities and be able to refer students to support facilities. Many communities have volunteer organizations of tutors who help students learn to read. Adults with learning disabilities need a one-on-one education that is specific to their needs. Tutors diagnose difficulties and prescribe a variety of materials and methods for revisiting key concepts. In addition, private tutoring reduces the embarrassment and confusion that so many LD students feel while attempting to keep up with students in the regular classroom.

6) It is important to retain as much of the native culture within the lesson plan as possible. The success of learning a language depends on the student's attitude toward the target language. Dismissing a student's culture will deepen misunderstanding and undermine self-esteem. Concepts are more easily assimilated if there is an existing knowledge base or schemata to which new information can adhere. That is why teachers should relate the materials to the knowledge base the student already possesses.

7) Adults need pragmatic materials and benefit by "hands on" experience. Teaching archaic language and meaningless structures in unrealistic situations is a waste of time. Instructors should focus on the "living language," the

vernacular and pronunciation patterns of the particular area where they are teaching.

STUDENT CHARACTERISTICS

Adult learners usually share a majority of the following traits.

1) A desire to know information that has practical value about topics already familiar to them-For example, students greatly appreciate vocational information on finding jobs and going to job interviews and practice with filling out forms for banks and government organizations.

2) An enjoyment of "hands on" activities-Students benefit from field trips, if only to an exhibition of student art work. At community college, writing and foreign language instructors had students view paintings and sculpture on display in the halls of the college. Students enjoyed describing and discussing the art work. Several instructors successfully used realia (newspapers, playbills, airline and train schedules) in the ESL classroom to enhance understanding and interest.

3) A learning style that draws on life experience-Adults (as well as children) find it difficult to assimilate isolated facts.

4) A need to be goal-oriented and self-directed-Teachers should work with adults to tailor a learning schedule that best suits the learner's needs. Adults are actively involved in their course of study and the sequencing of courses needed for a degree or simply for self improvement.

5) A desire to get their money's worth from the class and feel that their time is well-spent. Many students are evaluated in their jobs and realize that efficiency is important. In addition, the majority of students must take time out of a busy day to attend class. They sacrifice family and leisure time to learn English. Therefore, every minute they spend in the classroom should be rich in language-learning activities.

6) A feeling of being cut off from the regular college program. International students, especially, experience a feeling of isolation. If there is a large enrollment of students from a particular country, the students further isolate themselves by forming clusters of particular nationalities and speaking only their native language. Attempting to befriend Americans can be frustrating if the English proficiency of the students is not improving. Occasionally, students experience prejudice. Several students have complained about ethnic slurs and disparaging remarks.

7) A strong sense of fairness that makes them more apt than secondary students to contest a teacher's evaluation. Varying according to the culture, adult students are more willing to disagree with a teacher's assessment of their performance than a younger student.

8) A well-developed and particular learning style. Teachers should be aware than students sometimes prefer to learn following a certain method, be that rote memorization,

social interaction, visual or aural aids, etc. Varying the methods can greatly enhance interest in learning.

9) A need for alternative, flexible class scheduling to allow for outside obligations. Many foreign students are single parents and have difficulty finding baby-sitters. In addition, most do not have a driver's license or a car. Transportation and child care are just two of the problems adult students may have. In Las Vegas, many students work in the hotels and casinos, where their work schedule can change at a moment's notice. Having several classes available at different hours and allowing students to freely move between classes can encourage students to stay in the English course.

10) A respect for education for its pragmatic value, be that adapting to a job change and/or life crisis. At community college, we keep a record of the reasons students are learning English. Most state that their motivation is to get a better job or to plan for a job change. In addition, many retirees and mothers whose children have grown up now feel that it is their time to learn English to better themselves.

11) An expectation of clear procedures and evaluation measures for the class. The first day of class, students should receive a course outline with clearly-defined grading criteria and testing procedures. They use the outline to plan their course of study.

MOTIVATION

Student retention and success are often determined by the interaction with particular instructors. Teachers can enhance motivation by incorporating the following suggestions into their methodology (Duryee, 1989).

1) Set attainable and incremental goals for your students. Let them experience success.

2) Interview your students individually to determine their particular goals and help them develop a study plan to attain those goals.

3) Allow students to choose their own projects and to take responsibility for their work.

4) Be open to criticism and check periodically for feedback. Are you speaking slowing enough? Are the assignments challenging but not too frustrating?

5) Remember promises you have made to students and follow through on those promises.

6) Be consistent. Students feel secure when they know what to expect. However, that does not mean that uninteresting and/or ineffective routines should be maintained.

7) Allow the curriculum to be "fluid" so that you can adjust it to correct for particular errors made in the classroom. Each class will be different.

8) Vary your materials and methodology to provide for different learning styles (visual or aural).

9) Encourage cooperation and cross-cultural

understanding in the classroom. Try not to emphasize one nationality over another.

CULTURAL SENSITIVITY

Many cultural "do's" and "don'ts" of interaction with foreign students are a matter of common sense. However, part of teacher training involves a brief introduction to major differences, which may not be widely known, between American and certain international students. The following is an abbreviated list of guidelines instructors use in teaching Asian students, although most of the concepts can be applied across cultures.

1) Be friendly and accepting by immediately putting students at ease. Smile.

2) Help students to overcome shyness by letting them gradually participate in class answering yes or no questions.

3) Consciously and patiently count to ten for an answer and reward correct responses.

4) Do not try to force eye contact: looking instructors directly in the eye is a sign of disrespect.

5) Encourage students to take advantage of office hours. Many may not be comfortable asking questions in class.

6) Readily approach students out of class and engage in informal conversations to put them at ease.

7) Make a concerted effort to learn and pronounce students' names correctly.

8) Do not insist that a student call you by your first name if he is not comfortable doing so. Explain that some

instructors prefer to be called Mr./Miss/Mrs. together with the last name rather than "teacher."

9) Do not stand too close to a student nor sit on the student's desk. Touching a student by the teacher, especially between opposite sexes, makes students uncomfortable.

10) Realize that not all Asian groups have the same philosophy and background and that they may not maintain friendly and cooperative relationships with each other. Don't lump them all together.

11) Do not assume that students understand because they are nodding their heads. Frequently check for feedback.

12) Encourage students to actively participate, a novel concept for many Asians.

13) Help advise students on forming realistic goals. Some students may need several semesters of remedial English before they can attempt regular college courses.

14) Be sensitive to unusual behavior. Some students suffer from recurrent trauma due to events in their homelands or after their arrival in the United States and may need professional help.

15) Do not ask Asians personal questions. They feel uncomfortable discussing their home lives.

16) Be aware that compliments embarrass Asian students.

17) Do not touch an adult's head; to do so is highly offensive.

18) The middle finger raised means nothing to Asians; however, the middle finger and index finger crossed can be an obscene gesture.

19) Remember that parents are greatly respected in Asian culture.

20) Be aware that smiling can have various interpretations. A smile can mean disagreement, unhappiness, sorrow, or anger.

21) Do not place so much importance on your tests that students feel pressured to cheat to get a passing grade. Neither cheating nor helping each other is tolerated in Asian schools.

ADAPTATION OF MATERIALS

Students from different cultures need to go through the process of acculturation as they learn English. Many materials written for native speakers can be adapted to particular levels of English learners by the teacher. This process does not necessarily mean simplifying the ideas; in many cases only the vocabulary and syntax need to be adjusted. For example, materials written with relative pronouns and complex sentences can present understanding problems for beginning and intermediate students. Teachers generally know the grammar concepts students have been exposed to and can screen materials for complicated structures. Complex sentences can be broken down into simpler units and synonyms used in place of advanced lexical items.

Short (1989) lists a variety of methods for presenting material in "comprehensible chunks" of information by rewriting texts while including outlines and time lines that can stimulate critical thinking. Students can also be encouraged to draw upon previous knowledge and schemata to process new concepts. Teachers can emphasize important concepts while minimizing less relevant information. Pictures, photographs, flow charts, and accompanying graphic representations can further enhance understanding of complicated items.

Teachers who have sensitivity toward and knowledge of cross-cultural differences can tailor materials to particular nationalities within the class. In addition, teachers can create their own "spiral curriculum" by presenting concepts at increasing levels of difficulty and by building upon those ideas already introduced. Such a process gives the instructor more control over the content by allowing for adjustment of vocabulary to particular proficiency levels. Teachers can screen materials for biased and irrelevant information, thereby relating new information to the particular cultural background of the students.

Steps in adapting original text for ESL students (Strong) include:

1) Considering the students' proficiency level- Information is tailored to particular knowledge levels and various graphs and representations can be included in the presentation.

2) Building on students' prior knowledge-New information needs to be introduced in varying degrees of complexity so that students can develop a schemata for integrating new concepts in an existing knowledge base.

3) Highlighting specific text-Teachers can boldface or underline key concepts and delete irrelevant information.

4) Controlling new vocabulary-Authentic materials can be rewritten using simplified vocabulary without losing original meaning. In addition, teachers can introduce and explain new vocabulary before students read the materials.

5) Simplify grammar-Relative pronouns, complicated verb tenses, conditional and subjunctives, and negative structures all complicate text. Teachers can revise materials so that they contain a minimum of complex structures.

6) Structure paragraphs carefully-Paragraphs that contain the main idea first in a topic sentence and which are sequenced by various transition terms (first, then, next) are more easily understood by students of low English language proficiency. Teachers can also develop critical thinking skills by including phrases that denote cause and effect, result, and condition (because, as a result, so, so---that) and language that reflects the vernacular and pronunciation patterns of the particular area where they are teaching.

PLACEMENT

Placement comprises three areas: initial selection into the program, articulation between levels, and exit

counseling. Initial placement is determined by test score on a 100-item, material-specific test; advancement from one level to another requires successful completion of the course work; and exit-level counseling involves matching students with particular advanced ESL or regular college classes and providing them with support services (tutors, extra practice) if needed.

Initially, the community college ESL program is free for all students placed within the first five levels; students receive free texts and workbooks, and are required to attend class regularly. Consistent attendance is determined within the first two weeks of classes. Students with sporadic attendance are dropped from the course, and students on the waiting list may begin class late. Students who miss class can expect a phone call from the teacher; they are made to feel more responsible for their attendance.

The program is based on a combination of state grants to be used specifically for increasing the percentage of literate (English language) persons in Nevada. Support materials such as cassette tapes, tape recorders, computers, and software are included in the budget. However, teacher recruitment and training is not financially supported by the grants; program administration is the duty of the coordinator and several off-site supervisors.

For placement, the community college system uses a uniform test that is specific to the materials, tests and tapes used throughout the program. Students taking the test

at any of the two main campus or five off-center sites are assured reliable placement within the five-tier program. In addition to a 100-item short answer test, students scoring in the upper two levels write an essay and are advised on the basis of the score. Finally, students are administered a brief listening and speaking subtest that consists of informal conversation between the examiner and the student. In most cases, the test administrator is an instructor in the ESL program. Many students who do not qualify for the literacy program (first five levels) and are referred to the advanced classes for which they must pay regular tuition. The remaining students are placed within the first five levels and attend two one hour and twenty minute classes per week each semester. The classes are designed so that students can uniformly move from one level to the next; each class begins with a review of the preceding level.

ADVISING

Advising throughout the program is two-fold: teachers are evaluated and supervised by mentors during the semester while students in the program are moved through the progressive levels of ESL. Since many students remain in the the ESL program for two years or more, instructors have the opportunity to see their students succeed. Teachers are expected to know the support facilities at community college and within the community so that students can better be advised when they have problems that interfere with their course work. For years, community college faculty bemoaned

the increasing attrition rate and blamed a variety of factors, mainly themselves and the administration, for their students' giving up. Because ESL students are so closely monitored, personnel can detect problems and refer students to appropriate support services, thereby lessening the attrition rate.

EVALUATION

Evaluation, a touchy topic for most instructors and administrators alike, is a collaborative, rather than a uni-directional, process in the community college ESL program. Teachers, students, and the program itself are evaluated by pre-determined criteria. However, the criteria are examined and adjusted every year. Just as students are expected to attain certain levels of competence to progress from one level to the next, the program is investigated to determine if a majority of students is benefiting from the classes. All midterms and finals from every level of ESL are kept on file along with data concerning grades and retention.

Teachers meet with mentors and program administrators to discuss classroom observations and student data. Each instructor notes areas that can be improved in teaching strategy, and an individual growth-plan is developed. The subsequent evaluation uses the previous conference and growth plan as a point of departure.

In addition, staff development workshops are offered throughout the year at various national and state-wide sites. Each summer the university offers an intensive English

language institute for teachers who desire certification in ESL. The Nevada Teacher Training Project dispenses funds for part-time instructors to attend adult basic education and ESL conferences and seminars. Participants write a synopsis of those presentations deemed most valuable for teachers; the mini-reports are then published and distributed to adult education teachers.

PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION

The program on two campus centers and five extension areas is administered by the ESL coordinator on the main Las Vegas campus. The coordinator is responsible for staffing, teacher training, scheduling, fund allocation, management, and resources. In turn, the program is audited by the state grant officer who determines if the state guidelines have been adhered to. Grants for the following years and for special projects are planned with input from the main coordinator.

Each off-site center has a supervisor who oversees the instruction at that site and who advises the coordinator of problems specific to the site. The extension centers include two junior high schools, two remote towns, and several downtown sites. Some sites have recently been cut back to omit the two prisons and one of the major hotel chains. Large hotels who have a significant number of workers deficient in English have contacted community college to start a class on location. The community college has cooperated with local business and industry by providing such

a program, as long as the curriculum is uniform with community college guidelines. The program is then supervised by a site manager from the college.

Since the ESL educational network is spread among various centers, the primary job of the main campus administrator is to support instructors and supervisors in their efforts to produce an effective program. Evaluation is the duty of the coordinator from the main campus, but the responsibility for maintaining and delivering effective instruction is shared by instructors, supervisors and administrators. Therefore, the main task of the administrator is two-fold: to support instructors in their effort to provide meaningful ESL instruction by minimizing problems and, through mentoring and evaluation, to model effective teaching techniques.

Educational systems that plan for rapid growth can meet the challenge of training part-time ESL teachers in various ways. In the community college model described in this paper, administrators and instructors worked together in cooperative units, first in training programs, and later in established networks for communicating, not only problems, but also innovations and new materials. What makes this model effective is that there is two-way communication: teachers see the implementation of the changes they have proposed just as administrators feel that their criticisms and suggestions will gladly be heard.

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